



# Gavel & Badge

*The Official Newsletter for the Justices of the Peace and Constables Association*

November 2023

## NOVEMBER 18—JPCA DAY OF SERVICE

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*By Constable Christopher Bates, Jefferson County, Precinct 2*

JPCA has always been Stronger Together. On Saturday November 18th President Bates is asking every JP and Constable office to conduct a community service project in your precinct. Please take photos of your community service event and make a Facebook post tagging the JPCA Facebook page and include **#JPCADAYOFSERVICE**.

We would love to see JPs and Constables working together for a joint precinct project or even all JPs and Constables in one county working together!

You can even go the extra mile and invite the media out in a Press Release!

Make sure you sign up your community service project by filling out a short form on **[tinyurl.com/JPCASERVICE](https://tinyurl.com/JPCASERVICE)**.

Thank you in advance for your dedication to JPCA and your commitment to your community!

**JPCA**  
DAY OF  
**SERVICE**

**NOV 18**

Complete a community service project and post photos using  
**#JPCADAYOFSERVICE**

Visit the link or scan the QR code to sign up your service event

**[TINYURL.COM/JPCASERVICE](https://tinyurl.com/JPCASERVICE)**

## RANDALL COUNTY JP BYRD INDUCTED IN HALL OF FAME

**District 1** - The Honorable Tracy Byrd was inducted to the Canyon High School Hall of Fame. Judge Byrd graduated Canyon High School in 1979. While at CHS he was involved in Football, Student Council, Building Trades, Choir and Musical stage crew and was a class officer. He started college later at Texas Tech and eventually graduated from West Texas A & M University in 1994.

In January 1983 Tracy married the former Lisa Woodall and was blessed with 2 beautiful daughters Shaina and Staci. They also graduated from Canyon High school, 1981, 2003 and 2006 respectfully.

Judge Byrd is currently on the Board of the Dispute Resolution Center and volunteers with the Canyon and Amarillo Celebrate Recovery groups. On May 1, 2014 Tracy was sworn in as Justice of the Peace Randall County Precinct 1 Place 1 and has been elected to 3 terms.



## EL PASO JP PCT4 CLERKS NOW CERTIFIED CAR SEAT TECHNICIANS

**District 3** - According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children 14 years old or younger. The National Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that nearly 46% of car seats are misused.

“My goal is to educate the community on the importance of safety for their children as passengers in any vehicle as well as being in compliance with State law,” said the Honorable Rebeca Bustamante, Justice of the Peace Precinct 4. “To help make a difference, my entire staff, including myself, are now state certified as CPS technicians and will be assisting TXDOT in their car seat events.”



## TARRANT COUNTY CONSTABLE OFFICE PRECINCT 1 RECOGNIZED FOR OUTSTANDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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**District 6** - Tarrant County Constable Dale Clark's Precinct 1 office became only the 5th Constable's office in Texas to be awarded the Certificate of Accreditation for achieving compliance with Texas Law Enforcement's Best Practices Program. His office was presented the award by Robert Alldredge, Executive Assistant Chief of the Fort Worth Police Department. Asst. Chief Alldredge spoke favorably of Constable Clark's office and noted, "This Program has become the New GOLD Standard for Professional Law Enforcement in Texas and agencies across the state are working diligently to meet these requirements. This is a voluntary program. The agency had to do a complete audit of all its policies, procedures, training, and operations in order to meet these standards. The process culminated in June of this year when trained assessors -- Police Executives from other parts of the state -- made an on-site inspection of the agency."

Assessors interviewed staff, inspected facilities and operations, rode with field officers, and they ensured compliance with all standards. Their report was then sent to the Accreditation Committee, comprised of nine serving Police Chiefs from around the state, who reviewed the report and voted to award Accredited status to the Tarrant County Constable's Office Precinct 1. That vote was unanimous. During this process, the Tarrant County Constable's Office Precinct 1 has proven that it meets or exceeds all standards. There are currently over 2800 Law Enforcement agencies in Texas, and only 197 agencies are currently accredited through this program."

The Tarrant County Constable Precinct 1 Office is served by 10 full-time sworn law enforcement officers with an average of 29 years of peace officer experience and three non-sworn administration personnel. The Constable is a county elected official who appoints his staff, composed of a chief deputy, senior deputy, court bailiff, and six field deputies. The agency operates eight county vehicles: 4 marked and 4 unmarked units. The agency operates on an average annual budget of \$1.5 million.

## LOVING COUNTY'S FIRST BIRTH IN 30 YEARS

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**District 3** - Justice of the Peace Angela Medlin, Loving County, is a proud new mother to Kaylee Rose Medlin. Kaylee is the first baby born in Loving County in over 30 years!

"We do not have a hospital here. We had a midwife make the 1.5 hour drive to help with the home birth," said JP Medlin.

Loving County is the smallest county in Texas by population.





## ARMSTRONG COUNTY JUSTICES HOST COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR

**District 1**—Armstrong County Justices of the Peace partnered with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Armstrong County to host a “Way to Wellness” Health Fair on October 16th, 2023, at the Armstrong County Activities Center.

The Health Fair was free, open to the entire community, and offered something for everyone. Door prizes added to the fun! Over 20 vendors provided resource tables and giveaways. To keep things festive, the Porch Swing Eats & Treatz food truck was onsite with healthy snacks and drinks.



## WILLIAMSON COUNTY PCT 3 WINS NACo AWARD FOR FINANCE PROGRAM

**District 7**—The Williamson County JP3 Financial Literacy Program has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that strengthen services for residents.

NACo recognized the Financial Literacy Program for a 2021 Achievement Award in the

category of Criminal Justice and Public Safety. The Financial Literacy Program is a program designed to allow driving offenders the option to enroll in a financial education class in lieu of paying fines.

“I am honored that our team is being recognized for this national award,” said Judge McLean. “We believe that providing education for a mistake is a better service to the

community than just penalizing people. We see this as a unique opportunity to serve others.”

NACo President Gary Moore said, “Over the past year, county officials and frontline employees have demonstrated bold, inspirational leadership. This year’s Achievement Award winning programs illustrate the innovative ways counties build healthy, safe and vibrant communities across America.”

## UPCOMING TJCTC TRAININGS AND SEMINARS

### Court Clerks:

New Court Personnel  
Virtual: Jan. 16—18, 2024

Experienced Personnel  
Galveston: Feb. 26—28,  
2024

### Constables:

Corpus Christi 20 Hour  
Civil Process: Jan. 28—31,  
2024

Virtual 20 Hour Civil Pro-  
cess: Feb. 12 –15, 2024

### Justices of the Peace

Galveston 20 Hour:  
Nov. 26 –29, 2023

Corpus Christi 20 Hour:  
Jan. 21—24, 2024

## Chaplain's Corner

*By Constable Dwain Read,  
Ochiltree County*

One of the things that gets under my skin is when I see someone get away with something they did that was wrong and they knew it but for whatever reason they do not pay the penalty for the wrong. I am sure you too can recall situations both current and the past that you say, "Gee they are so getting away with that!"

As Christians, I trust that you agree we serve a just God, and we know that the Bible is loaded with examples of his justice. But at the same time

even today we see what is going on in our country and around the world and we cry out, "God where are you?" May I remind you that his calendar is not on his I-phone, and it stretches eons of time for us. He acts within the context of history and on his timetable.

I submit that injustices or criminal acts of men may go unpunished at the hands of men, but they cannot escape the judgement of Almighty God!

To many, in our country they say the problem is government.

The experts tell us that gov-

ernment should be there primarily to protect its citizens. Many question this and some are concerned about how governments in our world are conducting themselves.

Psalm 37:28-29

"The Lord loves justice. He will never leave his faithful all alone. They are guarded forever, but the children of the wicked are eliminated. The righteous will possess the land; they will live on it forever."

Thank you for your role in government and the dedication exhibited daily by your activities across this great State of Texas!

## TJCTC MENTORS: THE BEST RESOURCE YOU'RE NOT YET USING

Most courts are familiar with the TJCTC's website, online legal answer board, and the reference Deskbooks. A lesser known, but equally as helpful, resource is the Court Clerk Mentor Program.

### What is it?

TJCTC program designed to support and provide resources to justice clerks and their courts. Mentors can answer a wide variety of procedural questions to help your court and clerks effectively operate.

Brianna Waugh, Travis County, has served as a Court Clerk and New Judge Mentor for two years and says, "It's a great way to share information about things you might not have known before and learn about new technologies that may help them run their court more efficiently."

### Who are the Mentors?

Active justice court clerk volunteers with extensive training, experience, and knowledge. "You need a letter of recommendation and a resume, submit it the training center, and they will review it to see if you're a good fit," said Waugh, who received her Level 1 Clerk

Certification from TJCTC prior to becoming a Mentor.

### How can they help your court?

Mentors can answer practical questions about everything from what form to use, to where to locate that form, to learning about new features in your court software system.

"The Deskbooks cover general situations but don't always list out step by step instructions on what to do. Also, sometimes the Deskbook has answers in sections that aren't necessarily related but a mentor may know to put the two together," said Waugh. "Most of the questions that I get are about procedure. Less about legality and more practical. Practically, as a clerk, what processes would you follow."

### Who can use Mentors?

"It's very easy to seek out help," explained Waugh. "The website indicates the size of each mentor's office and what type of software they use in their offices. People needing help or mentoring do not have to register with the TJCTC. They can email the mentors directly."

### Which Mentor do I call?

Courts can reach out to any Mentor whose experience matches their question. "Recently a small county reached out me with juvenile questions that they'd never experienced before but that we experience every week," said Waugh.

### How long does it take to get help from a Mentor?

Mentors are often able to get you an answer the same day. "The benefit of a mentor is that you can get my answer right away and the legal board can sometimes take 3-5 days," said Waugh.

### Where to find them?

Find a list of active Mentors by visiting the TJCTC website:, under Court Personnel, then click on Mentors. Direct link - <https://www.tjctc.org/court-personnel/mentors.html>

Mentors are listed by size of office and # of clerks, the type of software used in their courts, and area of expertise. You can easily locate a Mentor with the knowledge to help you answer your particular question.



## Spotlight on Clerks—shoutouts from their JP or Constable

“Judges are successful because we have great staff that know their jobs. Those of us lucky to have clerks know how important they are.” - Judge Robert Gonzalez, Nueces County, PCT 5-1

“Courts would not function without our court clerks. They are vital to the judicial system. Behind every good judge are excellent clerks.” - Judge Evelyn McLean, Williamson County, PCT 3

“Court clerks can make or break a judge. They are the face of the professionalism that a court should project. Their knowledge and temperament are a reflec-

tion of the Judge. Court clerks are typically overworked and underpaid. They are to be appreciated and commended regularly.” - Judge Cliff Coleman, Bell County, PCT 2

“My job would be impossible to do without my staff!” - Judge Kenny Elliott, Brazos County, PCT 1

My office staff is like my pit crew and I get to be the formula one driver. Without the vital work that they do and their continuous support, my car wouldn’t stay on the track or go very fast. We try to be a well oiled machine, and know we have a lot of folks watching and counting on us.” - Judge Raul Gonzalez, Travis County, PCT 4

“My clerks are the backbone of my court and so very important

to the overall operation and support of my Court.” - Judge Chris Macon, Ellis County, PCT 1

“I’m so proud of being part of the Precinct 5 team. It’s a well oiled machine, you can feel the sense of pride in the work the support staff provides and the excellent quality of work our deputies execute. Not only do they work hard, they donate their valuable time to care for members of our County with the outreach programs we have in place! - Constable Carlos Lopez, Travis County, PCT 5

“My senior clerks Sally and Brianna are outstanding at their jobs and essential to helping our court provide excellent services to everyone from law enforcement, to the County Attorney, to the general public.” - Judge Sylvia Holmes, Travis County, PCT 3

## TJCTC’s CLERK CERTIFICATION PROGRAM PROMOTES EXCELLENCE

The Justice Court Clerk Certification Program allows experienced justice court clerks to demonstrate their knowledge of statutes, procedures, and ethical guidelines applicable to Texas justice courts.

Clerks who pass an examination receive certification from the Texas Justice Court Train-

ing Center as a Certified Clerk or a Master Certified Clerk.

Clerks employed by Justice Courts are eligible to take the Level 1 exam. Clerks who have passed the Level 1 Civil OR Level 1 Criminal exam are eligible to take the Master Clerk exam. Self-paced study modules for the Level 1 and Mas-

ter exam are available on the TJCTC website and completion of each module counts as 2 hours of educational credit.

Registration for clerk virtual exams is now open on the TJCTC website. To schedule an in-person exam, please email Darby Swoboda at [d\\_s520@txstate.edu](mailto:d_s520@txstate.edu).

## JPCA MISSION STATEMENT

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The Justices of the Peace and Constables Association (JPCA) is the largest organization of elected county officials in the State of Texas. JPCA was created by Texas Judges and Constables in 1945 to improve and promote the value of our offices statewide. Together we:

- Keep members of JPCA and the public informed and connected;
- Meet educational and training needs of the members and provide legal resources;
- Vigorously advocate for members' interests before the Texas Legislature; and
- Provide scholarship opportunities to our JPCA family.

WE are led by Judges and Constables for our entire membership.

WE represent those closest to the People.

## FOLLOW JPCA ON FACEBOOK and TWITTER (X)

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Receive regular updates and monthly member spotlights by visiting the JPCA Facebook page. Be up to date with members, events, awards, memorials, and trainings!

**Facebook:** <https://tinyurl.com/ukfjs6cp>

**X:** <https://twitter.com/jpcaoftexas>

## SUBMIT YOUR STORIES, SHOUT OUTS, and PHOTOS!

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Has your office been rewarded or recognized for success? Do you want to give a shout out to someone in your office? Have you seen or heard a case that would be of interest to others?

Share your funny stories, heartwarming moments, and educational anecdotes with other members. Photos are always welcome!

Send items via email to [Sylvia.Holmes@Traviscountytx.gov](mailto:Sylvia.Holmes@Traviscountytx.gov)  
Or by using this QR code





## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE 80th ANNUAL JPCA CONFERENCE

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Hilton Fort Worth  
815 Main Street  
June 24—28, 2024



## SENATE BILL 22 GRANT PROGRAM REVIEW & QUESTIONS

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As you may be aware, proposed rules [[sos.texas.gov](https://sos.texas.gov)] for the Senate Bill (SB) 22 grant program were published in the Texas Register on Friday, October 13. Comments on the proposed rules may be emailed to [Russell.Gallahan@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:Russell.Gallahan@cpa.texas.gov) and will be accepted until November 12, 2023.

Additionally, the Comptroller of Public Accounts has also published a webpage [[comptroller.texas.gov](https://comptroller.texas.gov)] with information on the SB 22 grant programs and frequently asked questions. **Should you have any specific questions related to SB 22 grants, the proposed rules, or the upcoming grant process or wish to sign up for GovDelivery messages, please email [SB22.grants@cpa.texas.gov](mailto:SB22.grants@cpa.texas.gov).**

## NCMA CONSTABLE of the YEAR—President Christopher Bates

JPCA President Constable Christopher Bates was recognized by The National Constables and Marshals Association recognized as the 2023 Constable of the Year. The award recognizes person with outstanding achievement and notable action in their office, inspires greatness to others, shows attention to detail and outstanding work ethic, and promotes events to raise awareness to a cause to benefit citizens or fellow officers.

Bates didn't envision himself in an elected role, but is experience as a deputy constable for the local school system inspired him to seek out opportunities to be a positive change in his community. In 2011, he became the youngest Constable elected in Jefferson County. "I knew I had a learning curve and I brought in people to help me be a success. I chose individuals experienced in the constable's line of work and even did ride alongs to learn."

Educating himself and others about the role of Constables in the justice system is key to his success. One topic he focuses on is helping law enforcement recognize the true aspects of the constable's job. "In police

departments, they don't know a whole lot about civil and my police training was 'refer it to the constable' for anything civil. When I got this job, I realized that a lot of stuff police referred wasn't the job of the constable!" Bates now spends time working with police departments to educate them. "Most things should probably be referred to the JP."

A desire to inspire others led Bates to create a mentoring program for Chief Deputy and Sergeant to inspire young employees and help his office continue to grow and learn. "The advancement that I've made, I want to see my office continue to grow."

Inspiring confidence among the public is just as important for Bates. "Texas constables are leading the charge to establish a groundwork around the nation" by focusing on professionalism and customer service. "You can do the 8-5 and choose to go home. I wanted to use the



influence that I have for good. The least I can do is give back, help empower their community and be a listening voice." One way his office leads the way in community outreach is hosting an annual 'Christmas with the Constable' program featuring a toy drive, free food, and mini-concert.

Bates began a criminal justice scholarship program in 2015 and has now awarded over \$30,000 in educational funds.